



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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Demand remains high for food banks statewide

OLYMPIA – New figures gathered by [the state Department of Agriculture](#) show there remains an increasing need for food assistance, with 1 in 5 Washington residents visiting a food bank at least once during this past year.

Between June 2011 and June 2012, there were more than 8.6 million visits to food banks across Washington state, 500,000 more visits than in the previous year, according to the figures collected by the [WSDA's Food Assistance Program](#).

"These numbers show that, in the coming holiday season, we can expect that food assistance programs will be stretched to meet the need in many communities," WSDA Director Dan Newhouse said. "My hope is that new partnerships we've formed with ranchers and dairy farmers, as well as farmers producing a variety of fruits and vegetables, will help to fill this need and that others will also step up their efforts to help the hungry among us."

The WSDA Food Assistance Program uses both state and federal funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide food and money to food banks, meal programs and tribal voucher programs in Washington that help feed families in need. Often working with the state's agriculture community, the Food Assistance Program works to alleviate hunger and provide access to safe and healthy food.

Some key facts about feeding the hungry this past year:

- The Food Assistance Program distributed 474 truckloads of USDA commodity foods to more than 1.4 million families.
- A total of 134 million pounds of food was distributed, 4 million more pounds than in 2011.
- Each person received an average of 15.68 pounds of food with each visit.
- On average, clients visited their local food bank six times in the past year.
- WSDA works with nearly 500 emergency food providers.

Every donation counts. Those who would like to help can contact the Food Assistance Program at foodassistance@agr.wa.gov or 360-725-5641.

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